

# *A Message for Family Members*

## **Be proud of your Soldiers**

As manager of Personnel Operations, I've come to appreciate what it's like to manage a small city. Our small section of six people oversees all personnel actions from the elation of promoting Soldiers to the sadness involved in sending Soldiers home for emergency leaves. Imagine having the responsibility to keep track of 2,000 people on any given day, knowing exactly where they are and what they are doing on that day! The tricky part is that some are in Germany training, some are back home on emergency leave, some are on Fighter Management Pass and many are out in various areas of Kosovo. The great part of this job is that we get to know many Soldiers from the task force on a personal level.

One of the projects we are working on is a yearbook for the entire task force. Some of you have probably received photos from your Soldier family member all ready. We are still in the process of taking some unit's photos and should be complete in the next few weeks. This yearbook will be published in July and will include photos from each unit's activities over this deployment. It will be a great memento to remember this tour for years to come.

During the next few months we will be busy processing awards for the soldiers. For service in Kosovo, all Soldiers receive a Kosovo campaign medal and a NATO medal for working in a joint task force theater. In addition, individual units are recognizing soldiers for their extraordinary service. Awards that soldier's may earn are the Army Achievement Medal, Army Commendation Medal, and the Meritorious Service Medal, each unique in the accomplishment, achievement and service to this unit and to their country. I wish I could share all the comments written by their leaders. You would be very proud of all the accomplishments your family members are doing here.

During the month of May, we will be working with Soldiers from the 38<sup>th</sup> Division from Indiana. Several of their key leaders will be visiting to learn more about



**Lt. Col. Don Matthys,  
Personnel Section OIC**

what we are doing and what is the general scenario in Kosovo. This will help them plan their training this summer as they prepare to be the next task force with duty in Kosovo.

Working in the personnel section, we stay pretty attuned to the pulse of what the Soldiers are feeling. I can assure you that the Soldiers are pretty content here. There are a lot of activities going on now; softball teams being organized, fun runs, concerts and much more. Despite the ups and downs of any given day, the Soldiers retain a remarkable resilience and continue to work hard to accomplish their mission.

# ***PSB supports your soldiers***

**By Spc. Sean McCollum**

The 147<sup>th</sup> Personnel Services Battalion, tucked into the heart of Admin Alley, provides many support services to the Soldiers of Camp Bondsteel. Through the efforts of the PSB, Soldiers are promoted, awards processed, and various other personnel actions are performed that make the Army go round.

"We do personnel services for the Task Force," said Sgt. 1st Class Janice Wilking, the non-commissioned officer in charge of the unit. "We work a lot for the G1 [personnel section]."

PSB and G1 work together to process any awards a Soldier may receive during the deployment.

Where the personnel section handles awards such as Army Achievement medals, the PSB processes all special awards such as the NATO Medal and Kosovo Campaign Medal.

Another key task of the PSB is issuing identification cards. The unit processes about ten identification cards per day through an elaborate computer network designed to prevent duplication, but on a good day many more cards can be processed.



***Sgt. 1st Class Janice Wilking, the non-commissioned officer in charge of the PSB, prepares the computer to receive the picture of Staff Sgt. Timothy Patterson, an Infantryman with Bravo Company, 2-135th Infantry, as part of preparing a new identification card for him.***

"If the computer is running pretty fast and we're able to get the cards coded correctly we can do 15 to 30 and the possibilities are pretty high," said Wilking.

Soldiers from the unit also ensure any promotions a Soldier may undergo on the deployment are processed. For a promotion to be valid, said Wilking, their paperwork must be sent stateside and processed at their home station, a task that the PSB ensures is completed.

"We have a scanner that we

use to scan the documents, we send them back, and then we just track to make sure they got updated in the system, get whatever reports we can get and then we let the units know."

Through facilitating promotions, awards, issuing identification cards, and many other personnel actions, the Soldiers of the PSB will continue to provide support to the Soldiers of Camps Bondsteel and Montieth to make sure they have time to focus on keeping the peace in Kosovo.



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# ***MNB(E) drivers share experiences***

**By Spc. Tim Grooms**

Amid horse drawn wagons, people walking in the streets, and close calls with passing vehicles, driving in Kosovo is an experience that can be much different than driving on the roads in the United States.

Most Soldiers are used to large highways, intersections that have traffic lights, and accurate road signs. Even after training, it takes time and practice to get used to driving in Kosovo and learn the roads, many of which are unimproved.

"Most of the training emphasized tactics we would be using," said Spc. Douglas Stewart, a driver for Charlie Company, 2-135th Infantry. "Most of the drivers here are pretty well prepared."

And while some have not had experience driving in other countries, others have experience in past deployments or other branches of the military.

"All my driving experience I got was for the Marines on smaller trails, and that is where I learned all my skills," said Spc. Alvin Wynia, a driver with Bravo Company, 2-135th Infantry.

Even with training, the chance to navigate through Kosovo on the many unimproved roads can test the nerves of some drivers.

Stewart, who drives a semi for his civilian job in Minnesota, said that driving his work truck here would be a little nerve racking because some of the roads are narrow and are even impassable for humvees. "We had the front end of a humvee slide off a trail and into a ditch but we got it out," he said, describing an incident that happened on one of the many dirt trails in Kosovo.

"When we got here in February it was snowing a bit but never really had any on the roads," said Wynia. "Most of the problems have been back on muddy roads."

M u d d y roads aside, there are other driving dangers present while off the base.

"S o m e people pass and drive right at you," said Wynia. "Kids will walk out in front of your vehicle."

After being deployed here and experiencing driving, comparisons to American roads are almost non-existent.

"Roads here are a little more narrow and windy than in Minnesota. People have a tendency of walking on roads," said Stewart.

"I can't really compare it to driving at home," said Spc. Charles Hauser, personnel security with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-135th Infantry. "You have to be more attentive to what is going on in your surroundings."



*Spc. Charles Hauser, a driver with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-135th Infantry, checks the oil level in the humvee he will be taking out on a mission*

After being a driver in Kosovo, however long they are here, most Soldiers will go home more respectful of the backroads and traffic jammed highways of the United States.

"I really enjoy driving in Kosovo and it has been a good experience but it will make me appreciate American roads more," said Stewart.

## *Find helpful answers to your questions*

Submitted by LeAnn Fobbs, Michigan

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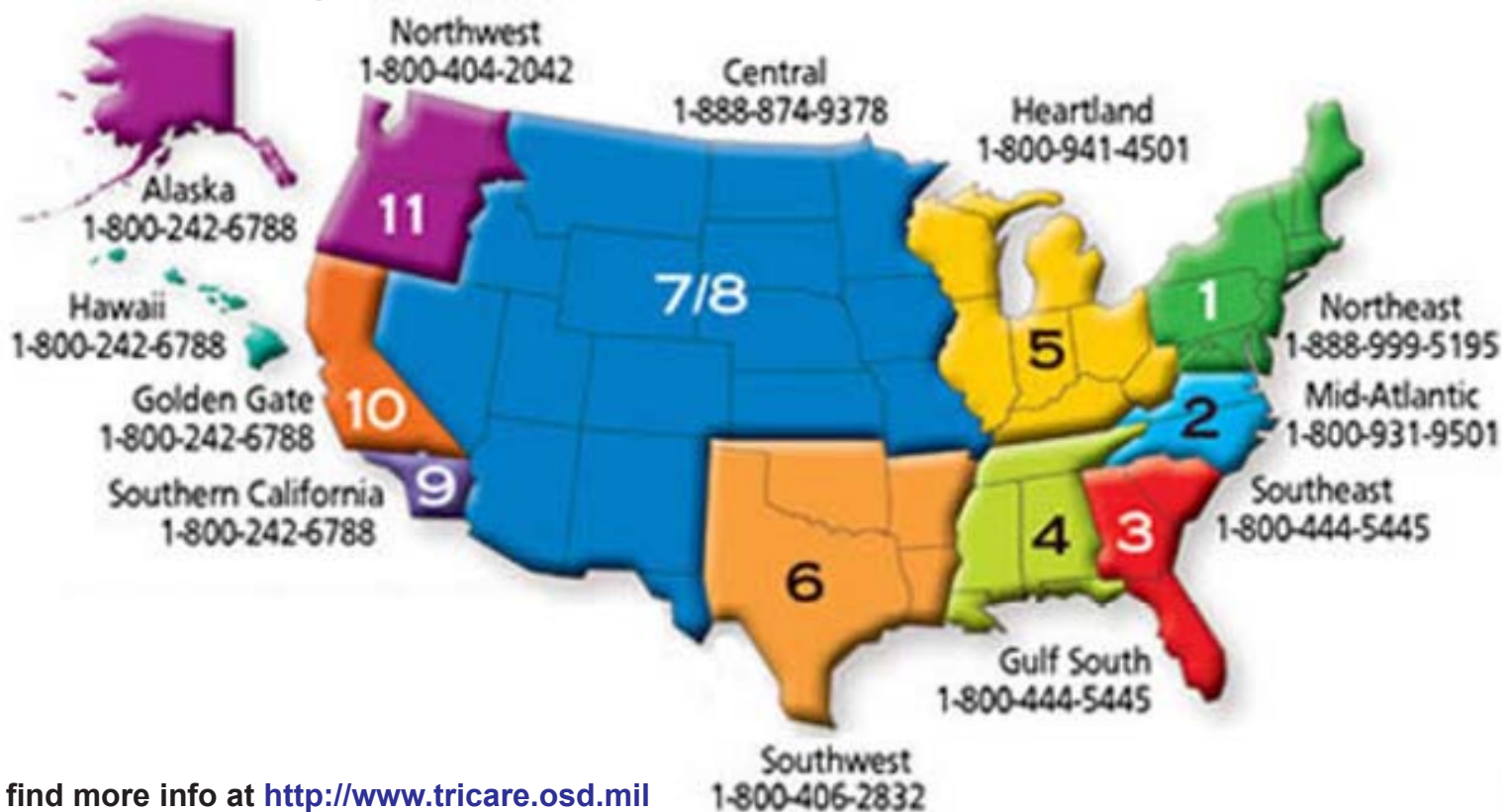
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